

Press Release

For immediate release
July 12, 2007

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President Bush Appoints RADM Thompson to Committee Overseeing AbilityOne Program

Rear Admiral Allen S. Thompson, SC, USN, Commander, Naval Supply Systems Command, Mechanicsburg, PA, was appointed by President George W. Bush to serve as a member of the Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled (Committee). He was sworn in on July 12, 2007, at the Committee's office in Arlington, VA.

The Committee administers the AbilityOne (formerly known as Javits-Wagner-O'Day or JWOD) Program, the single largest source of employment for Americans who are blind or have other severe disabilities. The AbilityOne Program requires the federal government to purchase certain products and services from nonprofit agencies employing such individuals. Currently, the AbilityOne Program employs nearly 48,000 Americans who are blind or have other severe disabilities on federal contracts at more than 600 participating nonprofit agencies across the country.

As a member of the Committee, RADM Thompson is responsible for determining which products and services will be placed on the AbilityOne Program's Procurement List, and establishing the fair market price that the federal government will pay for those products and services. Also serving on the Committee are representatives from 10 additional federal agencies: the Departments of Agriculture, Air Force, Army, Commerce, Defense, Education, Justice, Labor, Veterans Affairs, and the General Services Administration; and 4 private citizens representing the employment interests of people who are blind or have other severe disabilities.

"The AbilityOne Program enables many individuals to reduce dependence on Government support, join the ranks of taxpayers, and contribute to the Navy's critical missions," said Andrew D. Houghton, Committee Chairperson. "Past Naval Supply Corps Commanders have provided impressive service to the Committee and the AbilityOne Program, and I am confident that RADM Thompson will continue this fine tradition."

The Navy is one of the AbilityOne Program's largest customers. AbilityOne services provided to the Navy include laundry services, Base Supply Center operations, recruitment promotional materials customization, and food services. In fact, the military's largest food service contract is performed through the AbilityOne Program at the Great Lakes Naval Training Center in Great Lakes, IL. Last year, Goodwill Industries of Southeastern

Wisconsin and Metropolitan Chicago, Inc., located in Milwaukee, WI, prepared more than 9 million meals at Great Lakes, averaging 25,000 meals per day with nearly 31,000 meals per day served during peak periods. The Great Lakes contract provides employment to more than 750 people with severe disabilities.

Moreover, the Navy purchases AbilityOne military-unique products, including chemical protective suits, cold weather suits and shipboard mattresses; common-use items, including pens, file folders and note pads; and products, including flashlights, linens, and galley and food preparation products meeting the Navy's Plastics Removal in Marine Environment (PRIME) Program requirements through the Defense Logistics Agency, the General Services Administration and authorized AbilityOne commercial distributors. Last year, the AbilityOne Program provided \$220 million in services and more than \$10 million in products to the Navy.

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Together, the Committee and its two designated central nonprofit agencies, National Industries for the Blind (NIB) and NISH (serving people with a range of disabilities), provide assistance to AbilityOne-participating nonprofit agencies. All three groups collaborate to support the mission of the AbilityOne Program – to increase employment opportunities for people who are blind or severely disabled. For more information about the AbilityOne Program, visit the program's informational Web site, www.abilityone.gov.